

A D D R E S S

DELIVERED BY

THO. H. BURROWES,

BEFORE THE

EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY


OF

LANCASTER COUNTY.

OCTOBER 4, 1851.

LANCASTER:

M. D. HOLBROOK, PR.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2017 with funding from:

This project is made possible by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services as administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Education through the Office of Commonwealth Libraries

ADDRESS.

THE *first* centennial anniversary of the foundation of our native State arrived and passed away without Jubilee. The year 1782, though memorable as completing the full century from the landing of Penn, was then more memorable and more immediately interesting, as terminating the great revolutionary struggle of the confederated colonies, and crowning their united efforts with the possession of *Independence* and the assurance of *Peace*. As a member of the victorious and redeemed Confederacy, Pennsylvania forgot the advent of her own peculiar anniversary, in the joy of the common triumph:—thus foreshadowing that loyalty and devotion to our glorious Union, which has ever since marked her policy and illustrated her history.

But the *second* centenary from the foundation of our beloved Commonwealth, who shall witness its fullness?—For what will the latter years of its lapse be remarkable?—How shall its termination be celebrated?

These, Teachers of Lancaster County!—these are interesting and momentous questions; and, though it is “certain as death” that few who are here this day will join in celebrating an event, nearly the third of a century from us, it is equally certain that upon you, and upon those, over all the land, who are engaged in the same calling, second only to parental training and the teachings of God’s will to man, will depend the answer to the most momentous of these questions.

You will, probably, not be in the flesh among the fast doubling numbers of Pennsylvania’s sons and daughters, who will rejoice in the filling up of the second hundred years of her history. But your works will be present. A large majority of the hundreds of thousands of youth who now crowd your schools, and who for the next ten or fifteen years will be the pupils of the present generation of Teachers,—they will be there in the maturity of their powers. And what those powers shall be—whether for good or for evil—it is for you to determine. For, just such men and women,—just such moral agents,—in a word, just such citizens of Pennsylvania as their Teachers, parental, spiritual and scholastic, shall make them—will they be, then and there. Consequently, just such a Pennsylvania will this then be, as they shall be; **FOR THEY WILL BE THE STATE.**

These are solemn and startling truths; and this brief allusion to them may well preface an inquiry into the present condition of Education among us; and, into its true nature and right object.

The wise and patriotic framers of our first Constitution, enjoined it as a duty upon the Legislature, “as soon as conveniently may be, to provide by law, for the *establishment of schools throughout the State*, in such manner that the poor may be taught gratis.” This provision, in the sense manifestly intended by its authors, remained a dead letter during forty-four years, or from 1790 till 1834. It is true that laws were early passed for the instruction of the poor, as a distinct class, at the public expense; but no “establishment” of schools was made during that period. Colleges were numerous incorporated and

largely endowed; Academies were built and founded in almost every county; but the republican provision of our constitution, which evidently contemplated the general establishment, by public authority, of a system of rudimental schools "throughout the State," in which all without distinction, might be taught the first elements of knowledge, was worse than disregarded. Indeed, a literal compliance with its letter was actually made to violate and destroy its sense. The "poor," *assessed* as such—*classed* as such—put into *lists* as such—were publicly handed over to the chance tuition of such schools as private enterprise, the desire to speculate in such stock, or indolence to earn a living by manual labor, had "established" in the township. But where none of these motives—to the tender mercies of which the Legislature had left the children of the destitute—were sufficiently active "to establish schools," this assessed, and enrolled, and badged class of the State's paupers, was left in utter ignorance;—an ignorance, thank God! which, if it did leave them poor scholars in fact, saved them from being taunted and pointed at as "poor scholars," by their more fortunate companions.

From this state of degradation, which never could have been designed by Mifflin, and McKean, and Snyder, and Hiester, and Findley, and Hand, and Ross, and Gallatin and Pickering, and the other framers of her Constitution, the Legislature redeemed Pennsylvania in 1834, by the passage of the first COMMON SCHOOL LAW. With this great event no name is so intimately connected or entitled to so much credit, as that of GEORGE WOLF, then Governor of the Commonwealth. He had repeatedly advocated and pressed the measure upon the people and the Legislature, in his various Messages, till he finally enjoyed the distinguished honor of placing the Executive signature to this great but tardy act of justice. Second always to him, should be held in remembrance JOSEPH RITNER, his immediate successor, who gave the support of his influence and firmness to the Common Schools, during the trying crisis which immediately followed their first opening. Few now know the pressure then brought to bear against them; but at length, by the passage of the amended act of June, 1836, the Free School acquired a stability in Pennsylvania, which, though since often shaken, has never been destroyed.

The details of the system thus established and now in general operation, it is unnecessary to describe. You are no doubt familiar with them. But a hasty review of their general results, to the present time, may be interesting and profitable.

By a recent act of Assembly, the Common School System is now in operation, with greater or less benefit, in proportion to the faithfulness of its Directors and the qualifications of its Teachers, in every District of the State, the number of Districts being about 1400.

In these, together with Philadelphia, there were last year, in round numbers, 9,200 schools, 11,500 teachers, and 500,000 scholars.—The cost of teaching each pupil per quarter, for the six months during which the schools were, on an average, kept open, was about \$1.40; and the total cost of the system was about \$1,400,000

To exhibit still more obviously, the magnitude of the system's operations in some of its departments, it may be stated that during the seventeen years that have elapsed since its commencement, the whole number of schools has swelled from 762 to 9,200; of teachers from

808 to 11,500 ; and of pupils from 32,544 to half a million ; and, that the annual cost of the system has grown from about \$300,000 to \$1,400,000 ; while, during the same period, not less than \$15,000,000 have been expended by the people of Pennsylvania, in support of this noble effort ; exclusive of the large sums annually paid to sustain the numerous private Academies, Seminaries and Schools, which are also giving their invaluable aid to the glorious cause of general education.

Nor has Lancaster County, though slow in the start, made any failure or retrograde move, compared with the other counties, in this noble enterprise. While we of the city point to our common schools as having gained a foundation, which promises all that ought reasonably to be expected from them, we are proud to find that, in common with the county, we present an aggregate in the general tabular statistics of the State, which compares favorably with that of any other portion of it.

During the school year which terminated on the first Monday of last June, the number of districts in the county was 40, containing 300 schools, 375 teachers, and 21,500 pupils. The schools were kept open about six months, at an average cost per quarter of \$1,33 for each pupil, and an aggregate expense of about \$65,000.

Since the commencement of the system, our number of schools has grown from 53 to 360, of teachers from 66 to 386, and of pupils from 2,100 to 21,500 ; and, in the same period, we have expended \$700,000 in support of the Common School system, of which \$200,000 was derived from State appropriation, and \$500,000 from district tax.

If to this aggregate were added the statistics of the several respectable institutions of learning in operation in various parts of the county and in the city, such as those of the Litiz Schools, Cedar Hill Seminary, Strasburg and Marietta Academies, with those of our numerous other schools, private and congregational, the general exhibit would astonish those who have been in the habit of supposing our county to be more remarkable for wealth than love of learning ; and would show, that the number of youth receiving the benefits of instruction, is not less than 23,000, or nearly one-fourth of our entire population.

In common with the rest of the State, we also enjoy the benefits of another class of results of the Common School system, not expressible by figures, but, if any thing, more valuable than those just enumerated. These are :

The vast improvement in the number, location, construction, interior arrangements, and furniture of our SCHOOL HOUSES ; whereby the comfort, the habits, and the taste of our youth are proportionably improved.

The increase in the number, cheapness, quality and beauty of SCHOOL BOOKS ; which is so great as to be actually embarrassing to those whose duty it is to select the best for use, where all are good.

The *expulsion* of all degraded and immoral members from the PROFESSION OF TEACHING ; so that, at the present moment, the Teachers of Pennsylvania will compare, in point of morality and propriety of deportment, with any other class or profession among us.

And last, though perhaps best of all, an awakening INTEREST in the minds of the great mass of thinking citizens on the *common right* of mental instruction ; which, assuredly, never will abate till its great object shall be effected.

A system with this promising history, this vast and strong frame and these astonishing results, may well appear, to the casual observer, to be either perfect, or yet only defective in some of its minor details. But alas! they who watch it closely and are familiar with its actual workings, are compelled to think differently. While they admit the original and grand design to be as nearly perfect as any institution, merely human, can be, they read its eventful history as plainly suggestive of other and great difficulties still to be overcome. When they closely examine its vast frame, they behold only a rude though well compacted skeleton, still wanting the rounded proportions and the fit leverage of its muscles, and the last moving power of "the breath of life." And in counting its results, they are saddened to miss, from among them, that ample and protracted feast for the rising and hungering generation, and that fair compensation to its faithful "breakers of the bread of knowledge," which the one so urgently demands and the others so richly deserve.

Let any one take up the annual tabular statements of our Superintendents, and closely scrutinize them. He will there ascertain that while districts, and schools, and teachers, and scholars, are annually and regularly and largely *increasing*, yet, that almost from the first years of the system, the annual duration of teaching in the schools, and the salaries of teachers, have been slowly, it is true, but generally *decreasing*. Let him next resort to other sources of information, and he will learn that instead of the system having lived down all opposition to it, dissatisfaction and want of confidence prevail in very many parts of the State, and cripple its energies. With these facts before him, he will neither be at any loss to conclude that the system has failed of some of its most essential results, nor to determine the reason of its want of more general acceptance with the people.

That this is no random assertion, the following table, constructed from the annual reports of the Superintendents, will show :

Years.	Duration of Teaching.	Salaries of Male Teachers per month.	Salaries of Fem. Teachers per month.
1835	3 months, 12 days	No Report.	No Report
1836	4 " 3 "	\$18 34	\$11 96
1887	6 " 0½ "	18 89½	11 79½
1838	5 " 18 "	18 95	14 30
1839	5 " 8 "	19 39½	12 03
1840	5 " 8 "	19 39½	12 03
1841	5 " 7 "	18 91	11 45
1842	5 " 9 "	18 58	11 16
1843	5 " 14 "	17 54	11 06
1844	5 " 15 "	16 88½	10 41
1845	4 " 0 "	16 47	9 46
1846	5 " 1 "	16 69½	9 92½
1847	4 " 22 "	16 73	10 20
1848	4 " 24½ "	17 37	10 65
1849	4 " 26 "	17 47	10 32
1850	5 " 1 "	17 20	10 15
1851	not known.	not known.	not known.

In extenuation of this result, it may be said that though a general decrease does appear to exist, yet it is so small as not to be of great importance. The reply is, that the fact of a diminution is not deemed to be of so much moment as the absence of a positive and considerable annual increase. "To stand still," in this case like many others in human affairs, is tantamount to an actual retrograde movement; and the system which *produces less* and *pays its laborers less*, in counter-proportion with the increase of its means, and its materials, and its expenditures, must have some radical defect in its design or structure, or some gross mismanagement in its operations.

In justice to Lancaster County, it is proper here to say, that except during the years 1849 and 1850, her annual duration of teaching and the salaries of her teachers show scarcely any decrease, and both rank considerably above the general average of the State. Her schools have almost uniformly been kept open at least six months in the year, and salaries have averaged about \$21 per month for Male, and \$17 for Female Teachers. During the years just named, it is true there was a slight falling-off, but this is supposed to have been caused by the fact that several Districts then first put the system into operation; which process always, for the time, affects the regular business of instruction, by diverting the greater part of the means of the District to the erection and furnishing of School Houses.

But, though we have not fallen-off in the *essential* particulars under consideration, it is certain, that in common with the rest of the State we have not advanced.

To prove that they are essential—vitally essential—particulars, needs no argument. The mere statement of the fact, that a system, exclusively designed for *teaching*, annually *teaches less* while its expense increases, and *pays its Teachers less* while it annually exacts from them *higher qualifications and better work*, is sufficient to establish the point.

The facts are indisputable. The defects are deplorable. If not corrected the evils will prove destructive of the system. But they will be corrected; for Divine Providence never will permit this great basis of civilization and self-government to be destroyed.

To ascertain the proper corrective, we must first determine the origin of the evil.

Does it exist in the original design and structure of the system?—It is thought not, because the *design* is in the strictest conformity with every principle of republicanism, every dictate of reason, every impulse of justice; and the *structure* itself, though by no means yet perfect, cannot be the cause of the failure; for, though a mere machine, it has heretofore proved itself capable of performing all the duty required of it, and that more has not been required, is owing to causes above and beyond its own agency.

The defect, then, must be in some or all of the classes of agents entrusted with the care of the system. These are: Legislators, Directors and Teachers. A fair review will probably show that all are in fault.

The Legislature has been informed, again and again, by Governors and Superintendents and Conventions, that the great want of the system is the want of institutions for the improvement and preparation of Teachers. All admit this to be the main cause of its want of perfect

success, and consequently of the evils just described. This is plain. If Teachers generally were enabled to improve themselves, their schools must be better. If the schools were better, their benefits would be more fully appreciated and they would be kept open longer. And, if this state of things existed, the teachers, who are the ostensible agents of its production, would be more valued and better paid.— Again: until they are sufficiently compensated to ensure their continuance in the profession, and undivided devotion to it, little permanent improvement in the results of the system can be hoped for. But notwithstanding this plain case of need, and these evident principles, no relief is afforded. With short-sighted policy, \$200,000 a year are appropriated to the system, because it is supposed to be popular, when the annual addition of one-sixth of that amount, for the improvement of its teachers, would make it twice as popular and increase its usefulness four-fold. This is “the breath of life” which is yet wanting, and which no earthly power, save that of the Legislature, can breathe into the system.

A portion of its short-comings is also fairly attributable to Directors. If no citizens, except such as feel an interest in the schools, were to permit themselves to be elected to this office; if the responsibility of making a small addition to the school tax, for a year or two, were assumed; and if a corresponding reasonable addition were made to the Teachers’ salaries, and to the duration of teaching, some portion of the evils complained of would be obviated. The increase of compensation would attract better teachers, and induce greater effort on their part; prolonged teaching would produce more satisfactory progress in scholarship at the end of the term; and the tax-payer, who in most cases, is also the parent, would soon make the discovery, that he receives much more than an equivalent for his slightly increased rate, in the greatly increased progress of his children. In this way, viewed even as a mere question of popularity, a year or two of murmuring, would, in all probability, be followed by that degree of approval, which is always conceded to right measures, by an honest and intelligent community, when satisfied that public good and purity of purpose are the guiding principles of their agents.

Nor are you, teachers! without blame in this matter. Your fault heretofore has been a want of faithfulness to yourselves, and, through yourselves, to the public at large, and especially to the rising generation. Instead of associating together as a profession, and adopting means for mutual improvement, and measures for elevating your own standing, and asserting your proper position, as one of the most respectable and useful classes, you have been content to wander about as isolated individuals, throughout society, lightly esteemed and worse paid. Thus the term “school-teacher,” instead of being the most honorable in the land, as it ought to be, has been one, if not of actual reproach, yet, at best, only expressive of patient drudgery and ill-requited learning.

The effect of this absence of union and self-vindication, could not have been other, than that light estimation of you by your employers which has been so detrimental to your own interests, and so injurious to the schools and the system. But at length, in Lancaster County, this reproach is about being removed. If the Association this day formed, be regularly attended and judiciously conducted, the very best

influences must be produced. By this means you will assert your proper position as one among the learned professions; improve your knowledge of your vocation and of each other; and cause others who will be associated and act with you, to learn your difficulties, appreciate your value, respect your feelings and concede to you your just claims.

May God prosper the association! so that, till the Legislature shall grant the means of improving your profession, and Directors shall perform their whole duty toward it, its labors may accomplish all that private effort can effect for the public good, in the absence of proper public aid; and that when this aid shall at length, as it most assuredly will, be granted, the association may still continue to bind together for good all the friends of education in our county.

But, in the next place, suppose these evils to be fully remedied, and your doors about to open under the most encouraging auspices,—What is the true nature and right object of that Education, which ought to be imparted in our Common Schools?

This is a difficult question, and involves the discussion of some points that have given rise to dissention, and are supposed to embrace the chief inherent dangers of the common school system as a principle of general action. It will, however, be treated plainly but briefly; and may, it is believed, be found to admit of such conclusions, as ought to receive the assent of all reasonable and unprejudiced minds.

Education, in its most extended sense, is the due preparation of human beings for the proper fulfilment of the whole object of their existence. But this vast scope of preparation—embracing, as it does, functions physical, intellectual and professional, duties moral, social and religious; in a word, all the relations of both Time and Eternity,—cannot be bestowed by the common, nor indeed by any other single school. Hence must we seek some other definition, which, while it embraces the same indispensable, because true, idea, shall also present an orderly view of the different parts of the subject. This is necessary, inasmuch as the present purpose is to assign to each part its proper source of instruction. In this view it may therefore be said, that—*Education is that training which prepares human beings so to perform their physical, intellectual and professional functions, and discharge their moral, social and religious duties, as to promote their happiness in this life, and to secure it in that to come.*

This, though different in phrase, is identical in meaning, with the shorter definition first given. We know that we exist. We feel that our being has an object. We believe that the pursuit of that object is intended to promote, and its attainment to secure our happiness. Hence, whether we say, “Education is preparation to fulfil the object of existence;” or, “It is such training as enables us to promote and secure our own true happiness,” the idea and the result are the same. Again, HEALTH is promoted by the proper training, exercise and control of the physical powers; the purest PLEASURE is the fruit of intellectual culture; COMPETENCE is bestowed by professional skill; a QUIET CONSCIENCE is the offspring of moral conduct; LOVE and CHARITY, RESPECT and PEACE follow the exercise of the social virtues; and ETERNAL FELICITY can only be secured by obedience to the Divine Will—which is Religion. But these are all the true objects of existence, as well as the elements of happiness; and therefore when it is said that any one

duly fulfils the whole object of his being, the idea, that by the proper performance of all his duties, he has secured the elements of happiness just enumerated, is only expressed in briefer terms. For the purposes of the present inquiry therefore this more extended definition will be adopted.

Of this preparation for happiness, what portions may be conferred or commenced in the Common Schools? and what may not?

The Physical and Intellectual, the Moral and Social, may—The Professional and the Religious, may not.

For these assertions the reasons are now to be given.

With regard to the first class, little difference of opinion existing, little need be said; though it is feared that in most Schools, so much attention is paid to the cultivation of mind, as to leave small space for the care of the body, or the proper training of the pupil as a moral agent or a social being. This is all wrong, and so far destructive of his chance for happiness.

“A sound body” being necessary “to a sound mind,” and the perfection of *physical* development being largely promotive of health, comfort and success in life, and chiefly attainable during youth, it is as much the duty of the teacher to attend, so far as his opportunities and authority warrant, to the care of the person as of the intellect. Hence personal cleanliness, neatness of dress, no matter what the material, a proper posture of the figure whether in sitting, standing, or walking, sufficient exercise and an easy deportment, should be insisted on and made a regular branch of the pupil’s education.

Intellectual training, being the prominent purpose of their establishment, is in no danger of being neglected in our schools, however much the proper means of effecting it may be overlooked. It will not here be further dwelled on, as a full discussion of the subject would occupy more time than can now be afforded, and would more profitably come from one possessing greater experience.

The *moral* character of the adult generally depends on the principle and habits acquired in youth; and, though parental precept and religious instruction, are the great influences to be relied on for its proper formation, yet school room co-operation is only second to these in efficacy, and should never be withheld.

The great foundation principle of all sound morality is TRUTH. Truth in word is *Veracity*. Truth in deed is *Honesty*. Truth in work or study is *Industry*. Truth in promise is *Punctuality* and *Fidelity*. Truth in appetite is *Sobriety*, *Chastity* and *Moderation*. In a word, TRUTH is the essence of God himself, and its constant practice in all things must, necessarily, purify and elevate.

Let the systematic inculcation and practice of truth, then, form the basis of all moral instruction in the schools. When this is laid, all the other virtues will erect themselves upon it with little difficulty. Without it to sustain them, it is vain to expect their presence.

It has been decided that “Christianity is the law of the land in Pennsylvania.” This does not mean that the *Christian religion* is established by law among us; but, that the great moral principles of Christianity are the foundation of our laws. Of this there can be no doubt. All our laws, rules of construction, social relations, and individual rights and duties are based upon them. The precepts of the Decalogue, even to the extent of punishing profanity and

blasphemy, are enforced; the Christian Sabbath is observed; polygamy is prohibited; that God-like and distinctive command of Christianity, "Judge not that ye be not judged," has spread its divine liberty over our whole system of government, and assures to every one perfect liberty of conscience; "He that asks equity must do equity" is but the chancellor's mode of saying, "Do unto others as you would they should do unto you;" and, omitting a thousand other instances of like kind, in which Christian morality has become law, the very volume containing this divine code, is the one upon which we appeal to the Deity to witness our truth, when we testify in a Court of Justice.

Such being the ease, that volume, as the best moral instructor ever given to man, should always be present in the schools. It should always, however, be used without note or comment, or sectarian remarks, or selection of particular passages. If there be any pupils whose parents object to its use by them, they ought not to be compelled. But, so long as the great mass of the people draw all their rules of moral action from it, and build the frame of their laws and their government upon it, it is a bounden duty of the public to cause its precepts to be made known; and it is a right of our youth, who are so soon to take an active part in the affairs of life under the obligation of its precepts, to imbibe them at the fountain head.

There is another strong reason for the use of the scriptures in the schools. Those of the old Testament contain the only true account we possess, of the creation of the world, and of the history of the human family till the flood, and for many centuries afterwards. This account, so strongly substantiated by the sciences of Astronomy and Geology when fairly applied, and this history, the latter part of which has been recently so wonderfully corroborated by the discoveries of Champollion, in the reading of Egyptian hieroglyphics, and by Layard's excavations in the long-buried Nineveh—that indubitable Bible witness—should not be withheld from our youth, as a classic of beautiful style and undoubted authority, even if its accompanying moral precepts might safely be dispensed with.

No better opportunity between the cradle and the grave presents itself for the cultivation of the *social feelings* and the practice of the *social virtues*, than that of a well ordered and wisely governed school-room, in which all classes, ages and sexes meet and associate together. It is a complete miniature of general society, with the additional advantage of being under the unceasing oversight of a prudent head, whose power and impartiality to advise, decide, rebuke or praise, as each occasion may require, is constantly present, and acquiesced in by all. The boy or girl, thus thoroughly imbued with right feelings and principles of action, while pupil, school-fellow or playmate, will naturally and inevitably grow up into a kind and courteous companion—a duty-loving and law-abiding citizen.

There can be no doubt of the propriety as well as necessity of inculcating in youth principles, and impressing habits calculated to produce this result. It is the more necessary, in our country, to attend to this department of education early in life, inasmuch as our whole frame of society—the very existence of our government and preservation of our liberties—depends upon our voluntary and habitual obedience to law, and respect for each other's rights. We possess no

imperious government backed by an immense standing army, to enforce submission to a distasteful statute, or to protect any class who may become obnoxious to the majority. The only force which we rely on for the administration of justice, is that of a few police officers, often selected to the station because of their want of strength for bodily labor. The only Ægis over the rights of minority is the sacred Supremacy of the Law. The youth of the State should, therefore, be constantly and sedulously impressed with the principle, that obedience to Law, whether acceptable to the individual or not, is the first and chief duty of the American citizen; and that if ever the exercise of private opposition become general, there is an end to Republican Government—the perfection of civil Liberty.

It would seem then that the duty is plain of cultivating the *physical* powers, the *moral* sentiments and the *social* feelings, in connection with the *mental* faculties. In fact, the only doubt is, whether, in our schools, the mind does not receive an undue proportion of attention, to the injury of the body, the moral character, and the social relations.

It is now repeated, that Professional training and Religious Instruction are not to be imparted in Common Schools.

With regard to the first, there can be no difference of opinion. All seem to have a claim upon that public, to which all are responsible for the due performance of their social duties, for such degree of knowledge as will fit each individual for the proper discharge of these duties. And, the corresponding interest of society, in disseminating this degree of learning, is as direct and as strong as the claim. But, when the more advanced point is reached, of selecting and preparing for the exercise of the calling by which a livelihood is to be gained, this relation ceases, and the individual or his parent is free to choose for himself, and bound to accomplish his own designs, by his own means, and in his own manner. The only approach that can be made, by the public, towards aiding him in his plans, consists in this, that his studies in the public school, after he shall have acquired the rudimental branches, may have such a direction given to them, as shall promote the acquirement of the professional knowledge he has in view. But even in this case, no such departure from the general course of studies in a school should ever be sanctioned, to the neglect of the fundamental branches of knowledge, which are indispensable to the safe and respectable performance of those ordinary public and social duties, which every citizen may be called on to discharge.

As to Religious Instruction in the Common Schools, though there may be greater difference of opinion than in the case of professional study, there would seem, upon close and candid examination, to be equal reason for its entire exclusion.

All the advocates for its inclusion seem to admit that, what they call "sectarian religion" ought to be utterly avoided; meaning thereby the different creeds and views of the various denominations of Christians. But, at the same time, they assert the possibility and claim the right of laying in the minds of the youth of the State, a general foundation of those broad principles of Christianity, as a religion in which all agree, and which they contend may be done, without introducing sectarianism. Now, without dwelling on the insuperable difficulty that no two Teachers would probably agree in the

selection of these principles, and that the power to choose would be in itself sectarianism, the position is a mere begging of the question, if it do not amount to the giving up of the whole ground; for, it must be always borne in mind, that our State Constitution has laid down a short but expressive *state creed*, to be held by all persons whom it is necessary, for public purposes, to place under the sanction of religious obligation. No person is permitted to hold office who does not “*acknowledge the being of a God and a future state of rewards and punishments* ;” and the same test is applied to witnesses in a Court of Justice.

Now this religion—for it is to all intents and purposes a religion, if there be soundness in the definition of the term as given by Dr. Johnson and other Lexicographers, (viz : RELIGION : *virtue, as founded upon a reverence of God, and expectation of future rewards and punishments*)—must be professed by every one who comes in contact with the state, under circumstances rendering necessary an appeal to his conscience. With respect to this creed, all who profess its simple and plain articles stand on an equal footing in regard to the state; and, if they differ in the further details of their religious views, they then become *sectarians* with regard to each other. In this point of view, collective Christianity, Judaism, Mormonism, Mahometanism, and all the vast variety of religions which divide the human family, are equal to each other in the eyes of our constitution, inasmuch as they all profess the whole of this creed; but beyond this, their respective peculiar tenets are *sectarian* with regard to each other, and as such, none has any superior claim over the rest in the administration of any of the powers of the state. To remove all doubt on this head, the constitution further declares, that “all men have a natural and indefeasible right to worship almighty God, according to the dictates of their own consciences; no man can, of right, be compelled to attend, erect, or support any place of worship, or to maintain any ministry against his consent; no human authority can, in any case whatever, control or interfere with the rights of conscience; and no preference shall ever be given, by law, to any religious establishments or modes of worship.”

Christianity itself thus becomes one of the sects professing the simple and compendious creed, the belief in which our public policy requires, when it appeals to conscience. And, therefore, any instruction in the principles or details of the Christian Religion, as such, by public authority in the public Schools, would be as great a violation of the rights of the other sects of this state religion, as instruction in any of the peculiar tenets of any particular sect of Christians would be of the rights of all the other Christian sects.

This is the Constitution and the Law on the subject; and neither can be explained away nor evaded.

It only remains to ascertain whether this state of things is right.

It is fearlessly asserted to be—

Right, in point of *public policy* ;

Right, in respect of *private conscience* ;

Right, in view of all the *necessities of the case* ;

And emphatically right and just towards *Christianity*.

The great boundary principle of our government is, that no powers shall be possessed or exercised by it, except such as are plainly and

essentially requisite to the proper performance of its granted functions. Theory asserts, and experience among us has abundantly established, that the regulation of the religious affairs of the community, is neither necessary to the due administration of the Government, nor promotive of the peace and happiness of the governed. It is, therefore, right in point of *public policy*, were there any doubt as to the absence of the power, that the formation or control of the religious opinions of the community, should not be assigned, in any degree whatever, to the public schools, which are a part of the government.

"The rights of conscience" are not only jealously guarded by our constitution, as has just been shown, but so just and beneficial has this protection been found in operation, that the Legislature and the Courts—always regarding these as personal and private rights—have gone to the extent of securing to the parent, the entire control of the religious education of his children till capable of judging for themselves. Nay, after the death of the parent, the courts are, by act of Assembly, enjoined to prefer "persons of the same religious persuasion as the parent," in the selection of Guardians. If the Courts will not permit the control of the living parent over the faith of the child to be interfered with by ministers of other denominations, and the Legislature even extends that control after his death, how can it be even plausibly asserted that it is right for that branch of our Government, called the common school system, to assume the power? It is an infraction of the *rights of conscience* to attempt it; and, so long as we shall believe that every human being must answer hereafter for his own faith and his own acts, and that no human authority whatever can then intervene between him and the consequence of his belief and his deeds, so long must we assert and maintain the uncontrolled, absolute private rights of conscience; and especially must we guard them from being made public property in the public schools, during the impressive years of childhood.

Nor is there any *necessity* in the circumstances of the common school pupil, requiring from the system this kind of instruction. It is, indeed, here, not only admitted, but asserted, that due religious training is even more indispensable for every youth, than physical or intellectual culture, in the same degree as the soul is of greater moment and value than the body; and also that the best use of a good education is that of enabling its possessor to form just views and act rightly, with reference to the future state. Still this does not affect the question of the necessity of such training in the public schools.

It must be borne in mind that every Common School is, necessarily a *day school*; and that, save the few hours during which he is in the school room, the whole remainder of the pupil's time is spent in the company and under the eye, or at least within the direct control, of the parent. Now, as the selection and formation of the child's religious creed is the right of the parent; and as the child, while in the public school is not withdrawn from his control long enough to interrupt the exercise of this right, either by the parent or the spiritual instructor of his family, it is difficult to realize the existence of any necessity for the public school's interference in the matter at all.

Every morning and evening, Saturday afternoon, and the whole of the Sabbath, are left for this kind of instruction. Church and Sunday school doors stand open to afford it. Ministers of the gospel and Sunday

School Teachers are waiting, all over the land, to impart it. Why then neglect these better opportunities, and distract the energies of the Common School system, with a subject of discord and difficulty, to which it is not qualified to do full justice, even if it were proper for its action?

In the case of Boarding Schools and Colleges, the circumstances and the necessities being different, the practise ought to vary accordingly. No youth whatever, should be permitted to grow up without constant and careful religious instruction; and therefore, as the student of a College or the inmate of a Boarding School is wholly withdrawn from the personal instruction of the parent, that of his Professors and Teachers must necessarily take its place. No violation of the rights of conscience here occur; because the selection of the college or the school is the act of the parent; and he either took its religious character into consideration before making choice; or, if subsequently dissatisfied in this respect, has it always in his power to effect a change.

So, in the case of the private or congregational day-school, in which religious instruction is a regular part of the exercises. The sectarian description of the school is known to the parent before he sends; and he has no just cause of complaint, if it be different from that which he himself approves.

But, finally, this exclusion is emphatically just and the right in FAVOR of Christianity itself.

If, as we nearly all believe, the Christian's Faith is the only one, of purely Divine origin and appointment, in existence, all we need ask for it is a fair open field for its discussion and spread, without having its course impeded by governmental interference in favor of other creeds, or its own energies crippled by governmental aid. Human "truth is mighty and must prevail." Divine truth is mightier, and needs not the aid of human enactments or governmental propagandaism.

These two propositions are believed to be deductions from history, and to be irrefutable:

Christianity is the great civilizer and liberator of man; and in exact proportion as it is left unfettered by governmental interference, is Christianity successful in performing its divine mission of civilization and liberation.

The Christianity here meant, is not a mere code of cold morality, or an abstract system of philosophy; but a living religious faith, convincing the reason, warming the heart, converting the soul, and in influencing the whole life and conduct.

The careful student of history learns that before the advent to earth of this reforming principle, the general progress of the nations was one of continual degradation, from a state of comparative liberty and happiness and independence, to one of despotism, luxury and subjugation; and that though the so called arts and sciences flourished, yet they only prevailed as ministers to pomp and indulgence, and, finally themselves tended to the overthrow of liberty and national independence. This is the history of Egypt, Assyria, and Persia; Greece, Macedon and Rome. This is also, to a great extent, the story of God's own chosen people; who, in proportion as they violated his commands, were left to depart from the high state of civil liberty which his divinely instituted government conferred; and, under their

own rebelliously choosen task-masters, were made to suffer oppression and captivity, conquest and despersion.

How different the history of man from the coming of the Liberator! This great event found the nations in darkness, wickedness and chains. It did not indeed, at once, miraculously transform, liberate and elevate them; for God has, ever since that era, wrought by means intelligible to our reason. But it exhibited to the earth the light of its great principles, and wherever they were received, the slow and gradual, but sure consequence has been improvement in the arts of peace and increase of freedom, in proportion as they have been permitted to operate: so that, whereas, before the "earth was sitting in darkness," and the tendency of everything was downward; since, it has been upward and onward, towards light, happiness and liberty.

How any impartial person can *disregard* ~~believe~~ this story written upon every page of history, in favor of Christianity as a Divine agent. and against Heathen Philosophy, as a mere human invention with its bitter fruits continually present, is one of those problems in human nature, hard to be understood. Were there no other argument in favor of the divine origin of christianity than this—to say nothing of the fact that it was the religion of our fathers, and as such, is entitled to our respectful consideration—this alone should at least cause us to examine its claims in a spirit of candor and with an openness to conviction.

But, in the second place, Christianity has not everywhere produced the same fruits. The reason will be perceived, if history be studied a little more closely.

Till the early part of the fourth century of its own era, this divine mission to the nations, was entrusted to its own energies, and to the labors of its persecuted but truth-inspired ministers; and was slowly but certainly effecting its object. Then Constantine seized upon its growing influence, and made it into a state machine; and, from that event, it seems, for centuries, to have comparatively lost its elevating energies. Still, under all the disadvantages of state trappings, and the inventions and cumbrous ornaments of human pride, it continued, wherever sincerely received, to soothe, to sustain and to purify. But not till a much later period, did the difference in its effects, in different places and under different circumstances, become so palpable, as to be decisive against Governmental connexion. Let modern History be candidly searched, not with reference to the comparative orthodoxy of the creeds of the various sects of christians, but solely with respect to the effect of an alliance or the absence of it, between Church and State; and the result must be the admission, that, in proportion as this alliance has been more or less intimate, just in the same proportion has been the progress of civilization and the growth of liberty. From our own bright and free land, the descent may be graduated, with almost mathematical precision, down to Russian Darkness and Despotism.

With History thus open before us—with Heaven born Truth staring us in the face,—dare we profane the cause of Christianity with governmental aid? Dare we take the first step, in retrograde of that progress, which has been so slowly and so laboriously effected, thro' long centuries of persecution, and superstition and blood?